

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A central venous catheter shaft comprising:
a proximal tube segment containing a polymer material of a first durometer and a first amount of a radiopaque filler;
a distal tube segment having a polymer material of a second durometer and a second amount of a radiopaque filler, wherein the first durometer is higher than the second durometer and the percentage by weight of the first amount is lower than that of the second amount; and
a transition tube segment interposed between the proximal tube segment and the distal tube segment.
2. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of a first polymer material and a second polymer material having a different durometer than the first polymer material.
3. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of the polymer material of the first durometer and the polymer material of the second durometer.
4. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, wherein the durometer of the polymer material contained in the transition tube segment continuously varies over the length of the transition tube segment.
5. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 4, wherein the durometer of the polymer material contained in the transition tube segment continuously decreases from a proximal end of the transition tube segment to a distal end of the transition tube segment.
6. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 4, wherein the durometer of the polymer material contained in the transition tube segment continuously decreases from the first durometer at a proximal end of the transition tube segment to the second durometer at a distal end of the transition tube segment with no abrupt durometer shift.
7. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, wherein the percentage by weight of the filler contained in the transition tube segment continuously varies over the length of the transition tube segment.

8. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 7, wherein the percentage by weight of the filler contained in the transition tube segment continuously increases from a proximal end of the transition tube segment to a distal end of the transition tube segment.
9. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, wherein the proximal, distal and transition tube segments together define a single tube and the single tube contains one or more lumens.
10. (Currently Amended) A central venous catheter shaft comprising:
 - a proximal tube segment containing a polymer material of a first durometer and a first amount of a radiopaque filler;
 - a distal tube segment having a polymer material of a second durometer and a second amount of a radiopaque filler, wherein the first durometer is higher than the second durometer and the percentage by weight of the first amount is lower than that of the second amount; and
 - a transition tube segment interposed between the proximal tube segment and the distal tube segment such that the proximal, distal and transition tube segments together define a single integrally formed tube.
11. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 10, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of a first polymer material and a second polymer material having a different durometer than the first polymer material.
12. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 10, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of the polymer material of the first durometer and the polymer material of the second durometer.
13. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 10, wherein the durometer of the polymer material contained in the transition tube segment continuously decreases from the first durometer at a proximal end of the transition tube segment to the second durometer at a distal end of the transition tube segment with no abrupt durometer shift.
14. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 13, wherein the percentage by weight of the filler contained in the transition tube segment continuously increases from a proximal end of the transition tube segment to a distal end of the transition tube segment.

15. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 10, wherein the proximal, distal and transition tube segments together define a single tube and the single tube contains one or more lumens.

16. (Currently Amended) A central venous catheter shaft comprising:
a proximal tube segment of a first durometer;
a distal tube segment of a second durometer that is lower than the first durometer;
and

a transition tube segment interposed between the proximal tube segment and the distal tube segment, the transition tube segment being continuously variable in durometer over the length of the transition tube segment such that the proximal, distal and transition tube segments together define a single integrally formed tube.

17. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, wherein the percentage by weight of the amount of radiopaque filler contained in the proximal tube segment is lower than that contained in the distal tube segment.

18. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of a first polymer material and a second polymer material having a different durometer than the first polymer material.

19. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, wherein the transition tube segment contains a mixture of the polymer material of the first durometer and the polymer material of the second durometer.

20. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, wherein the durometer of the polymer material contained in the transition tube segment continuously decreases from the first durometer at a proximal end of the transition tube segment to the second durometer at a distal end of the transition tube segment with no abrupt durometer shift.

21. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 20, wherein the percentage by weight of the filler contained in the transition tube segment continuously increases from a proximal end of the transition tube segment to a distal end of the transition tube segment.

22. (Currently Amended) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, wherein the proximal, distal and transition tube segments together define a single tube and the single tube contains one or more lumens.

23. (New) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 1, further comprising a hub component attached to a proximal end of the proximal tube segment and adapted to remain outside of a patient body.

24. (New) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 10, further comprising a hub component attached to a proximal end of the proximal tube segment and adapted to remain outside of a patient body.

25. (New) The central venous catheter shaft according to claim 16, further comprising a hub component attached to a proximal end of the proximal tube segment and adapted to remain outside of a patient body.